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THE DIRGE OF THE SEA- CHILDREN



KENNETH RAND



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The Dirge
of the
Sea-Children
and Other Poems

BY
KENNETH RAND



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TO
MY FATHER

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The author wishes to thank the editors of the following magazines for their courtesy in permitting him to reprint many of the poems in this volume: *Yale Literary Magazine*, *Lippincott's*, *Adventure*, *Smith's Magazine*, *Yale Courant*, and *Yale Record*.

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THE DIRGE OF THE SEA-CHILDREN
AND OTHER POEMS

THE DIRGE OF THE SEA-CHILDREN

THE MOURNERS

*This for the sea-child—all the open seas
For grave—a square of canvas, iron bars
To help him down—and let the hissing spray,
Speeding the dying day,
Chant the wild death-song with the wet sea-
breeze.*

Down from the woe and the wars
Of the feverish world of men—
Into the cool arms of the old sea-mother—
Could another
Soothe you as she does, when
Lost in the meshes of her streaming hair
You hear her croon that magic melody
Of grief too strong to bear—
Sobbing along the beaches endlessly
Her weird dusk-dirge,
Till the gray ocean and the gray sky merge,
And all is dark—
Hark!—
The poignant wailing of eternal Pain!

THE SURF

*Grief—grief—grief—in vain
We sigh the sadness of the rolling years
And cry the madness of the brooding Fears—
Grief—grief—grief—the chain
Of Time runs out and dims in formless black
Obscurity, a night without a star,
Strown with the dim tide-wrack
Of derelict dreams.
Far, far,
Is it a light that gleams
Over the waste sea-track?*

*Grief—grief—grief—behold
The tongueless sorrow that pale light reveals
The songless morrow that wan cycle wheels
In from the gloom of Time!
Grief—grief—grief—the gold
The lavish Day-star squanders fades to brass—
See how he wanders, like a pallid mime
Over the shoaling ocean's sodden swell,
Where never keel shall pass
Nor skilled tongue tell
The romance and the glory and the rhyme—
The mystery—
Of silent sea—*

*Or the grand frenzy of the storm-wind's wrath!
Here is the mighty epic's aftermath—
Salt-barrens, and a night without a star,
Strown with the dim tide-wrack
Of derelict dreams.
Far, far,
See how the last light gleams
Over the waste sea-track!*

THE MOURNERS

Sobbing the song breaks—hear the ripples lap
The shifting, changeless sands—
See how they wrap
Their light foam-fingers round the clumps of
weed—
Stroking with fairy hands
The flotsam that the restless breakers breed—
Casting upon the beach to rest awhile,
Till the flood-tide
Draws them once more to her capacious breast,
Plays with them, here and there, to trick, be-
guile
Her world-long road's unrest—
Then spurns aside.

Restless, O Mother, as your children's hearts—
That flit like fading ghosts
In a dim wraith-dance up and down the world,
Blown like the stinging spindrift, onward hurled
From Thule's battered coasts
South where the heat-haze parts
Its veil of fantasy,
Gemming the sleepy waves
With magic isles of scented sorcery—
West, on a headlong, straining, sunset-chase
Clear to the furnace-doors of Orient—
Turn, O ye wander-slaves!
Ere strength be spent,
Think ye to find a respite from the race?
No rest—no rest—we die;
Yet still our corpses strew the foam-ringed
strands,
And still the sea demands
Her children—hear her sigh—

THE OPEN SEA

Children—O children—who have felt my kiss
Have known my love, my tenderness—
My soft caress
And the exultant bliss
Of my great strength that sweeps around the
earth—

I—I—who knew your birth
As I shall know your death—
Croon you a magic slumber-song, a breath
Snatched from the cool green grottoes in my
 depths,
Where sleeps
The peaceful gathering of weary dead,
Swung in the strong arms of my cradling
 tides—
Softer by far than graveyard's moldy bed
 That Earth provides.

Children—O children—who have known my
 smile,
My merriment, my treachery,
 My guile
 And cruelty—
My cold brutality—
And worse than all, my bitter, biting scorn
Of Man and all his darings and his deeds—
Come, all ye children, ye that know
 Where leads
The path ye go—
 And yet have sworn
Your love for me on many a lonely tryst,
 And my cold lips have kissed

With your hot young ones, soft and fresh and
red—

O all ye dead—

Ye brave and nameless dead—

The path is free—

I—I—the mother, lover, slayer, call

My children all—

I—I—the Sea!

THE SURF

Grief—grief—grief—our tears

We sow in spume along the barren shore—

We know the doom the darkling ages pour

O'er the still-struggling world.

Grief—grief—grief—what leers

Smirking and mouthing in the creeping dark,

With sneering lip upcurled?

Back, back,

O fiend! for stark

Lies the white salt-waste, stretching on afar

To horror of a night without a star!

• • • • •
Whence come these drifting dreams?

Far, far,

Is there a light that gleams

Over the waste sea-track?

SILENUS

THEY say Silenus danced once on a cliff
That dropped a hundred even fathoms sheer
To black-toothed reefs, the toppled battle-
ments

Raised by Earth-Titans when the world was
young

And new lands braved the sea. Aye, on the
verge

The leering wood-god, strayed in merry maze
From fevered Bacchanalia, loosed his limbs
In a wild clumsy choral prancing, till
His inky shadow mocked the silver moon
And shocked the somber dignity of night.

And now when seas of Time have drowned the
torch

That flaunted flaming mane at Bacchic feasts,
Silenus leaps in motley—here a patch
Torn from a pale priest's robe, and there a rag
Of silk or satin from a lady's gown;
For he is mad with stronger drink than wine,
And he is mad with baser flame than lust,
And from the rim of Time, wild-drunk with *life*,
Flings empty flagons at the Infinite.

THE APOSTATE

TOWARD a goal of fading mist
I have plodded desolate;
I the bloody rod have kissed,
And have borne a brother's hate,
And the shame of low estate;
I have prayed, ye did not list.

If ye had but stooped to clear
From the doubting minds of men
But a weft of clinging fear
I would not have stumbled then
To my father's gods again;
But I prayed, ye did not hear.

I am but an atom caught
In your long infinity;
Have ye then of comfort aught
In your cold Divinity,
Or your silent Trinity?
I have prayed, ye answered naught.

“THERE’S LIKEWISE A WIND ON THE HEATH”

*O gypsy, what is the worth of life, and why do
ye sing all day,
When there’s work to do in the fertile fields,
a-reek with new-mown hay?
—I sing, i’ faith, of the skies above and the
world that spreads beneath—
There’s a road that runs to the ends of earth,
and a wind on the open heath!*

*O gypsy, what will ye leave the world, or ever
ye come to die?
I’ll leave the sun and the lovers’ moon, the gift
of an empty sky—
A lightsome heart and a roving foot, but the
best that I may bequeath
Is a road that runs to the ends of earth, and a
wind on the open heath!*

THE GARDEN WALL

THE MOTHER

Look ye, O children, the rose is blown—
 Gay is our garden now—
For the Sun is trailing his robes of gold,
Warm and scented, and fold on fold,
Like a spendthrift monarch, has reckless thrown
 His cloak o'er a blossoming bough:
 —And the little winds that fall
 So wearily over the wall,
Whisper "*O rest ye now*
 To our failing minstrelsy—"
 O to be free,
 Young and free,
And sleep in the shade of the wall!

THE CHILDREN

If ye climb by the twisted oak
 That grows in the garden there,
(There's a limb that ye all may grip,
If ye dare the risk of a slip,
And the toll of a tattered cloak,
 And a snarl of twigs in your hair)
Ye may win, if ye do not fall,
To the top of the garden wall.

Over, O over the garden wall,
Out to the beckoning road—
Looping away where the mountains call,
Stooping to play where the valleys fall,
Down to the shore of a sunlit sea
Flashes the beckoning road—
O to be free,
Old and free,
And follow the beckoning road!

TUSCAN DAWN-SONG

Who is it sings by the Florentine gate?

(And the soft night pales to the morrow)

Patient art thou, O lover, to wait

Thy belovèd so long at the Florentine gate—

(Ah, red flower of heart's sorrow!)

I hark to thy mandolin's lilting,

(See the white road stretch to the dawning)

While yestereve's roses are wilting

To the tune of thy mandolin's lilting—

(And the breezes blow the morning.)

See where the highway dips to the vale—

(Heart o' the Dawn, but life is sweet)

And the shadows flicker and faint and fail

Where the magical highway dips to the vale—

(And the whole world waits at our feet!)

TO YOU IN ROMANY

O WILL you never understand the reason that
I love
The magic roads of Romany your little feet
have trod—
The camp upon the hill-brow, where in lone-
liness with God
You see the sleepy earth below, the luring stars
above?

And may I never tell you of the haunting of
the dream
Of sky and sun and wander-wind, and sails
upon a sea
As blue—well, as your eyes, my love, for
can there really be
In all the waiting wondrous world a truer,
bluer gleam?

I may not seek and be in hope that I shall ever
find
My black-haired blue-eyed gypsy-maid, and
yet I ever dare
To quest along the highway till the world is
left behind,
And then to follow farther where the kindling
planets flare!

*Follow farther—follow farther—though the
dawning-lights remind
There is but a lost dream-Romany—and you,
my love, are there!*

AUSWANDERER

O THE land is dead and your souls are dead,
Dead with the burden of toil and tax,
Cramped and stunted and shriveled and sere,
And the lash of the law is hard on your
backs,
And the endless toil will never relax
While the lungs draw breath and the blood runs
red.
Eat, for the strength to toil again,
Toil, for the life is ever dear,
Though the spirit starve on the meager bread,
Though ye live like bullocks and not like men.

For the law is the law, though it be of steel,
Hammered and forged for the groaning
earth,
Not to be loosed, and scarce to be borne—
Pity the land that gave ye birth,
But what do ye think the land is worth
In the question of human woe or weal?
Flee, ere ye rot in your fathers' gyves—
Up and away in the eye of the morn—
With a favoring wind and a hurrying keel
Flee—only thus may ye live your lives!

O westward follow the beckoning sun,
Prairie and forest and lake and sea,
 There at the end your goal shall be,
 Hemmed by no cramping boundary,
But wide as the floor of the limitless deep,
And free as the winds of the open sky,
 From the rolling slopes where the fleecy sheep
 With their sunburnt herdsmen wander by,
To the sheltered ranch in the mountain's lee.
Freedom to live and freedom to die,
Freedom to sow, freedom to reap,
And freedom to rest when the work is done—
When the blood is chill and the race is run.

THE SUICIDE

FRIENDS, who have loved me well and known me
ill,

Who called me joyous only yesterday—
You know how dear it was to me to stray
Free-footed, restless, drawn by every hill
That promised Heaven beyond, till heart and
will

Swept with the winds a million worlds away!
Yet earth has never child she may not slay,
Nor sea a lover that she cannot kill.

The road is calling, and I may not wait,
The breeze that fans the stars shall be for
guide—
Good friends, 'tis never time for tears, when
wide
Swing the kind portals of the Æon-gate!
And should men name me dead, I beg ye, say
“Nay, he but wearied here, and went away.”

THE DEBT OF THE GODS

If so you never have known
 Joy of a god,
Never, afar and alone,
 Pinnacles trod,—
Battle of failure or love,
 Summits of gaining and giving,
Lo, the high Heavens above
 Owe ye for living.

If so you never have won
 Bliss of a night,
Night of a victory done,
 Dream or delight—
Climax of love or of strife
 Rapture of gaining and giving,
Look ye, the masters of life
 Owe ye for living.

If so ye never have leaped
 Stung by the fire,
If so ye never have steeped
 Soul in desire,
Suffered and won by a breath
 Struggle of gaining and giving,
Masters of life and of death
 Owe ye for living!

THE RED ROMANCE

THERE's a laugh and a curse on the dim-lit
quays—

(Ah, liquor and love and a waiting wave)

There's a muffled cry on the languid breeze,
Where the tide-rip sets to the silent seas—

(*Ah, liquor and love and a waiting wave.*)

What is it swings by the harbor's rim—

(And all in the name o' the Red Romance)

What is it bobs through the shadows dim?

With a knife in the back can a dead man swim?

(*And all in the name o' the Red Romance.*)

O it's down to Jones with the bones of the
drowned—

(Flotsam rides on a following sea)

Where the rolling waves sweep the wide world
round,

And the Trade-wind shrieks to the outward-
bound—

(*Flotsam rides on a following sea.*)

THE OLD HIGHWAY

THERE once was a road down the valley,
Dropping away to the seas,
When the pine-woods crept to the edge of the
dust
That powdered the friendly trees;
When the pillared forest-alley
Shook to the spring-wind's gust,
And a gay stream fell like a tattered veil,
Shreds of foam-lace, delicate, frail,
Torn by the restless breeze.

There once was a road down the valley,
Ere the sun was shorn of its rays
To gleam like a specter's wraith-wrought
shield
Through the dusk of the chimneys' haze—
Ere the slaves of Task and Tally,
Orderly, bloodless, steeled,
Changed the rattle of galloping feet
For the treadmill trudge of an engine's beat,
And the hearth for the foundry-blaze.

There once was a road down the valley,
And still, as the old moons wane,

And the steel rails stretch to the mist-draped
morn

Like a glittering faery lane,
Ye may feel the dead years rally
To mock at the years unborn—
A whinny, a laugh from a wayside inn,
The clink of a bit and the hoof-beats' din,
The brush of a wind-blown mane!

PAGANISM

A CONVENT—long and low and gray and still,
Hedging the open road with quiet wall;
Above, a luring hill—and then a call—
Some sunburnt stroller's song:

*"O the sun is gold and the sky is blue,
And blood is warm and hearts are true,
And the world is just for me and you
And Love to walk about in!"*

Ah, singer, you who cry the joy of spring,
To ears that hear you through the Litany,
Quick! while the dream-lips cling, is piety
Or the blind Love more strong?

*"Belovèd, the gold of swift To-day
Is snatched by Yesterday away—
O seize and spend it while you may—
'Tis a gay world to be out in!"*

THALASSIA

A VISION of some moonlit night at sea,
When ships are shod with silver, and the
waves
Soft-footed tread their endless chorals
through

To a low-tuned æolian melody—

Was it a dream, or did the eye see true
Fair scattered tresses flung upon the breast
Of cradling rollers, sobbing burden-slaves
Of flotsam from the Islands of the Blest?

A maiden very fair and very young,
With eyes that matched the sapphire of the
seas—

Full-robed in Death's eternal chastity,
In vain the foam went wantoning among
The silken-woven golden fantasy
Of hair that dared the white flood of the moon,
And brought the sun of lost Hesperides
To shame Diana's silvered plenilune.

She seemed to slumber on the tender arm
Of monstrous Titan mother-creature
wrought
In the dim cosmic dawn, of chaos-clay;
That could not save, and yet that would not
harm,
And weeping stooped unwillingly to slay;
That might not choose or know the Right or
Wrong,
But only love the child the waves had
brought,
And steal the wind's harp for a cradle-song.

Whence came the endless wailing? Lo, the sea
Rang with the sorrow of the dirge that rolled
As though the wild, wet lips of all the
world
Poured out the anguish of eternity;
“Ah, mortals, when the reeling ships are
hurled
Back to the womb of life at Fate's behest,
Why fear, when I am here to guard and hold,
I, who of mothers am the first and best?”

THE WITCH OF MEMORY

FRESH spells! New spells! True spells to-day!
A charm to keep the frost away,

That makes the rose-time never die—

Come buy

A bit of sun and summer-breeze,
Of love and life and leafy trees,

When zephyrs sigh.

Fresh spells! New spells! True spells to-day!
A bit of magic from the May,

A snatch of song where swallows fly—

Come buy

A spring-day when the pulses leap
And all the southern breezes sweep

The sapphire sky.

Fresh spells! New spells! True spells to-day!
That point the road to Yesterday,

That start the tear-drop in the eye—

Come buy

A ghost of long-forgotten love,
The tryst, the silver moon above,

The last good-by!

THE PRETENDER

GRIM blue guns that rattled and jolted, dim in
the dusk of the morning,
Bandaged heads and the curling lips that told
of a victory won;
Clink of the sabers and click of the hooves, and
the leader's stumbling warning,
And, bent o'er the horn of his saddle, a strip-
pling with hair like a shred of the sun.

O ye masters of battle, that ravage the hearts
of the slumbering valleys,
Ravage ye also the bloom of the garden of
life, and the blossom of Youth?
Lo, for the price of a Throne ye are selling a
spirit to slave in the galleys—
Ask ye the Child who is slave of the Throne
—mayhap he will tell ye the truth!

“Not for the crowns of a thousand kings, not
for a nation’s pillage,
Not for the glory of ermine robes, nor fame
for the bards to sing—
Never for these would I barter a day of my
dream in the old home-village,
Youth that I lost when the scarred old vet-
erans shouted and hailed me King.

“Kinsman, an ye would hold my throne, yours
it would be for the willing—

Ah, but I bow to a grim gray wolf, I who
am lord of my realm!

And the serpent nests on the daïs steps, and
the word goes out for the killing,

‘Soldiers, your King bids ye each be brave,
and wear his plume in your helm?’

“You—do you lust for my blood, as they say?
—or live with a secret sorrow—

You, who are younger, in sooth, than I—I
who am old as the world?

Old as the world, and dead as the world, and
drear as the trudging Morrow

Bringing its burden of one more day, and
one more banner unfurled!”

Grim blue guns that rattled and jolted, up to
the rim of the morning,

Grim gray troopers that softly swore, and
dashed the sweat from their eyes;

Lo, from the head of the column there rippled
the wave of a whispered warning,

And the stripling strove to scowl like a King
as the sun looked over the rise.

A LYRIC FROM THE SPRING-EPIC

THERE's never song in all the world
 To charm the heart o' me
Like song of spindrift tempest-hurled
 Across a barren sea;
There's never tune in all the earth
 With half the swinging, shouting mirth
 Of the old song
 The bold song
 Of sun and empty sea!

There's never joy in all the days
 That sweep the seasons by,
To pass the lure of winding ways,
 Of wind and summer sky;
There's never bliss can match the thrill
 Of dawn-light on a crested hill,
 And the gray road
 The gay road
 Beneath a summer sky!

Ah, love, and can the sum of all
 The earth and sky and sea,
The April-lure, the Summer-call,
 The Autumn's sorcery—

Outweigh the wealth of pagan gold
Thy tangled, truant tresses hold,
 When the glad wind
 The mad wind
Has lent its sorcery?

LOVER'S DAWN

THE earth and sky
Have a song as old as themselves ;
And you and I
For one brief moment, while the dawn-torch
flings
Its pagan tresses wild, for cirrus-elves
To sport among, find wings
That lift us to the hearing of their voices
Ringing in cadenced chorals over trackless
seas—
Hark, how the wind rejoices,
Singing the love-notes of long-lost Hesperides !

The earth and sky
Have a song that is ever new ;
But you and I
Have found a wild and haunting melody
Of long unrest, of roses and of rue—
Till all Infinity
Fills with the perfume of dear joy and sorrow,
Sweet tears and laughter of a phantom yester-
day.
What promises the morrow?
“Feet wander paths that meet a million worlds
away.”

THE SEA-TRAMP

O THE skies are dim and dreary and the days
are dull and weary—

If you hark you'll hear the eerie wailing of
the autumn-gale;

And there's in my heart a sadness mounting al-
most to a madness

When the ebbing harbor tide-rip tells its old
familiar tale.

Then I hear the sea-wind singing and the warn-
ing fog-bell ringing,

And a whisper comes a-bringing just a dream
of Southern sun—

Till my painted picture-islands lift their
foamy-footed highlands,

And I find the trail of rapture, ever new
and never done!

So I huddle down, a-dozing, while the dying
coals are posing

As the bloody sunset closing in the furnace
of the West;

Then the moon, a ruddy wonder, breaks the
velvet night asunder

And the forefoot springs a-flaming o'er the
Highway of Unrest.

Then old faces come to meet me, and old places
 seem to greet me,
And old enemies to beat me in the fight for
 gold or fame,
'Till my whole mad Youth is standing on the
 hearth-rug there demanding
That I give account for wasting it in folly
 and in shame.

Though ye be no kin, O Brother, dearer are
 ye than another—
Blooded by the world-old Mother to the
 Ocean's sorcery ;
Though old bones may never bear it yet old
 hearts will ever dare it—
Look! The harbor-lights are dimming. . . .
Let's beat to open sea!

THE CROWS

OUT from the gloom of the mountain-gorges,
 Dark in the glow of the dawn,
See how they scurry like shadow-wrack,
Each in his funeral-cloak of black,
 Faint and fade and are gone.

Dancing away down the ribbed ravines,
 Chattering ghouls astride the breeze—
Haste, O Beloved, thy weary feet,
Out where the desert and skyland meet,
 Merging in mirage-seas.

Beloved, the way was all too long—
 (See how they settle around!)
Let the heat-fog's flickering fancy-veil
Cover thy death when the spent limbs fail,
 Droop to the sun-baked ground.

Up through the gloom of the mountain-gorges,
Red in the glare of the Sun,
See how they swing in a serried line,
Wheel and hover and weave and twine,
When the bright day is done.

ONAGH OF THE WESTERN WIND

BLACK was the night and wild—
And the wet lips of the wind
Planted fierce kisses;
Racing the cloud-wrack piled
Sky-seeking crags, while behind
Raved the mad blisses
Tempest-taught sea-children know,
Wrung from the wrath of the West;
Tortured wave-devils below
Heard its behest.

Dashing on high, they clothed
Reef-tattered headlands in white
As for a bridal;
Crashing the waves betrothed
Sea-foam to cloud-trailing night,
While rang the tidal
Anthem of thunder and fear
Torn from the reeds of the gale—
Plunging the surf-stallions rear,
Lashed by the hail.

Wet were thy cheeks, thy hair,
Salt with the sting of the spray,
Gay with the peril;
Wilder, more fearfully fair

Than the cold birth of the day
Paling in beryl;
Mad with the passion and wine
Poured from the caverns of space,
Sudden I glimpsed the divine
Joy of thy face.

Born of the wild west wind,
Savage, yet wise as the sea,
Kin to its rages;
Sure hast thou suffered and sinned,
Loved and rebelled, to be free,
Daring the ages;
Lo, and the night of my heart
Flashed to a splendor of flame!
Hotly I sundered apart
Shadows of shame.

Wraith-maiden wast thou, or sprite
Blown from the Isles of the Ghosts,
Storm-fool's derision?
Spun from the mist and the night,
Thule's dim ice-battered coasts
Wafted in vision?
Lo, for the hands that I grasped,
Lo, for the lips that I pressed,
Mocked me and fled, and I clasped
Winds of the West!

EPITAPH

WHAT wealth was mine, O Lord, I wept at leaving,

As miser weeps who has too freely spent;
And Faith and Fear of Death were lost in grieving,

And restless discontent;

I watched the Sun

Its last course run,

And died, still weeping, at its red descent.

The gold that melted 'mid its fading blazes

Was all the wealth my poverty could keep;
The wind that whirled the leaves in idle mazes

My barren-lands may reap;

And yet I deem

My wealth of dream

Far dearer than the gold I held so cheap.

Mine heirs, I leave you sun and scented breezes,

And my great mansion of the open sky;

Fee-simple right to roam where free heart
pleases,

Where'er the path may lie;

No words of doom

Carve on my tomb—

But just "*He loved the world, and grieved to die!*"

HARBOR-BOUND

OLD ships that drowse at anchor, empty-hulled,
Whose keels have known the wash of many
seas,
And borne full many burdens—argosies
That foreign winds and foreign waves have
 lulled
To restless slumber on the restless deep,
 That now in sheltered harbor-corners sleep
The silent sleep of spent slaves burden-dulled—
Old ships that sleep.

Old men that sit a-dreaming in the sun,
Whose lives have known the sting of many
pains—
The sting of pleasures too, mayhap—whose
 brains
Have wrought what wonders ere their day was
done:
Forgotten heroes of a failing dream,
Placid they sit—or do they only seem
Careless of ancient treasures lost or won?
Old men that dream.

ROMANCE

SOMEWHERE a sapphire ocean laves the shores
 Of garish islands, where the beaches' sand
 Is all fine-sifted gold-dust, and the land
 Swells like a dryad's bosom to the doors
 Of lofty brass-domed palaces, burned red
 Beneath the tropic sunlight's liquid pall,
 Girt round with groves of wonder-blossoms
 tall
Where all the world but Love and War is dead.

And Love is languishing in dungeon dark,
 And War is raging round the palace towers:
 And, wreathed with gay hibiscus, Death lies
 stark
 Half-hid in coppices of passion-flowers:
 And Failure laughs in rags, while mourning-
 bell
 Is sounding crowned Success's solemn knell.

THE PRODIGAL

I SAT alone amidst the wreck of life—
 Its fading splendors
 Still lingered, failing;
Poor pallid ghosts of love and joy and strife,
Such phantoms as a fevered brain engenders
 That loiters, quailing,
 On the dim brink
Of long oblivion, and clings
 To humble, simple things—
As roses, ruddy sunsets, songs of birds—
 And fears to sink
Back to the mother earth that bore it. Then,
E'en while I pondered deep on prosy words
(Vain words, like "dear," "beloved,"—aye, or
 "God")
 One knocked, and knocked again,
 On the worn portals of my senses.
 Fairy-shod,
A Being entered—nor more beautiful
On earth the wheeling years have ever seen—
And whispered, "I am Pleasure. Dost still
 know
How good a servant I have proved to thee—
 How dutiful—
 What gay pretenses,

Bright masks of bliss for thy dull poverty,
Thou owest me?
All that thy brain or heart or soul have been,
They owe
To me, to Pleasure, King of all the World!"

But I was bitter with an ancient wrong,
In that I e'er had lived and laughed and sung—
For I was passion-hurled
From sun-gilt crest of life's high pinnacle
Down to the depths where rang the mocking
song

That Satan, somber-drunk, sad-cynical,
Trolled in the days when "all the world was
young!"

I too was young once—or I think so—see,
How the years slip like coins from open hands!
How old am I? A day—infinity?
What matters it? Too old, in life, to live,
And far too young, in years, to die. Ah,
Pleasure,

How may I pay the debt I owe,
Or give

Full, full redemption? Though
Gold of all Time were mine, the endless treas-
ure
Of endless years,

Heaped in a mass to fill the Heaven-span,
It scarce could buy one small, gay, lilting
 laugh

Caught in a snare of dawn and dream and dew!

 Ah, Pains and Griefs, and Fears,
Man's dread familiars all, since life began,
 Ye are but sordid chaff

 Of blight-rid garnerings—the true
Soul of the harvest lingers, mocking, hidden
Under the symbol of a lilting laugh!

 So, slave unbidden,
 So faithful, kindly, joyous, dutiful—
 Pleasure, of form so beautiful—
Light-limbed, bright-tressed, soft-clad in silk
 and gold—
Come you to mock? Bah! Get you gone
 again!
My hearth is deep with ashes, dead and cold.

 And so you go? Well, then,
Adieu! I watch you leave without regret.
 Ah, God!—and yet—
Stay, stay! Once more—ah, just once more!
 —renew
That old dear laughing joy of dawn and dew!

THE THORN-GARDEN

YOUTH and Love once chanced to part
In the garden of my heart;
“Later on we’ll meet again
‘Neath the bramble-hedge of Pain—”
Thus spoke Love—Then braggart Youth:
“Rather ‘neath the Rose of Truth!”

When the cycles’ slow revolving,
All our hopes and fears dissolving,
Wheeled around the trysting hour,
Where was Love? and where was Youth?
Thorn of Pain or Rose of Truth?
Hark ye! Travel-stained and dour,
Underneath the Rose of Pain
Youth awaited Love again—
While beneath the Thorn of Truth
Jaded Love was seeking Youth!

THE FLOWER-PEDDLER

WITH the columbine
And the eglantine
For new love, and for folly,
Now by my rood
I'll suit thy mood
So be it grave or jolly;
So be it sad
Or bad or glad
I have the flower to please thee—
The red, red rose
When love-light glows
And Cupid's witchings seize thee;
Or underwood
For maidenhood
And purest love, I borrow
The violet shy—
But should Love die
I've myrtle for thy sorrow.

*I've a bunch of vine
And some columbine
For Wine and Youth and Folly—
But the flower for me
(And perhaps for thee?)
Is the rue for melancholy!*

MORNING-SONG ON THE OPEN ROAD

AWAKE, O Belovèd! the dawn-torch is burning,
The lark o'er the meadow his matinal sings;
The darts of the Sun-god the mountains are
turning

From emperor's purple to crimson of kings.
The road is before us—the hills call to follow,
To beckoning distances luring away;
To-day is to-day, and to-morrow to-morrow—
Ah, quick! ere they die to a dim Yesterday!

Awake, O Belovèd! the moments are hastening;
The summits are blazing with ruddy raw
gold;

And *wanderlust*-ridden the spirit is questing
Beyond the dim hills where the valleys unfold.
O art thou a gypsy? then haste to the roving,
And waste not in sleeping the gifts of the
Sun,

But out on thy journey be joyfully moving,
That never is ended, yet ever begun!

Awake, O Beloved! thy red lips are smiling—
O pleasant the dreams that thy slumber-eyes
see—

Yet fairer the visions, that ever beguiling
Call over the ranges of far Romany.

Ah, love, must I waken thee ever with kisses,
My love with the dawn-splendor hid in her
eyes?

Ah, Thou and the Road are the dearest of
blisses
That gild our old world with immortal sur-
prise!

THE LIFE PRISONER

MEN with the flush of the wind in your faces,
Glint of the dawn in the depths of your eyes,
Send me a thought from the desolate places,
Windy spaces of Paradise;
I shall never see new stars rise.

Just one breeze from my palm-fringed islands
Trailed like pearls on a dreaming sea;
One lone gust from my storm-racked highlands,
One lone cataract flashing free!
Master of Mercies, O pity me!

God! How I prayed, on my knees, for hang-
ing—
Death—for death—not a man-wrought hell!
Answered the leg-bar's mocking clang—
*“Lo, while you live, hear me clank your knell;
Pray to the stones of your cell!”*

THE KNIGHT

ACROSS the world I followed you, O love,
And found you weaving chaplets for your
hair;
I called the mighty dome of heaven above
To witness You were fairest of the fair;
I cast the wealth of princes at your feet,
And spurned it, since you scorned to call it
sweet.

Sword of a king, or clash of bannered host—
Ah, love, they were but pawns I flung in
play—
Pawns that I laughing won and laughing lost,
Or if it pleased you, laughing cast away;
Yet, should the tumult stir a single bud
Of your rose-wreath, I drenched the world in
blood.

Ah, Empress of my shadow-bordered realm,
Who weaves a wreath of roses and of rue,
Behold, the flaunting pride-plume of my helm
Is at your feet, in dust laid low, for you;
Ah, Gods! There live none glorious as I,
Who win one rose to cherish as I die!

STRAW-DEATH

I who have lived my life,
My years of hot-blood roving, in the sun—
Now that my course is run,
Is it for me to die
Hemmed from the sapphire sky,
Scene of my joy and strife—
Die here—where the pale chilling blood can just
 Stain my wan lips
 As the soul slips
Into the darkness? Shall I die in bed,
Lost in the shadows of a dimming room,
Unutterably sordid? Give me dust
Sweeping across the barrens, choking down
The feeble death-gasp till the red stars reel
In a weird dirge-dance round my sinking head,
 Rather than see through gloom
The specter-pallid nurse in white and gray,
The ice-nerved doctor with his black-browed
 frown,
 Stealthily steal
To fend the last light of the dying day
With close-drawn blinds from my light-thirsty
 eyes,—
Ye sunset-skies!

*I used to know your splendor! Let me die
Like any dog, but let it be away
Under the open sky!*

Give me to die like a beast, afar, alone
With but the hawk and crow
To watch beside me while I cast my soul,
And but the sky to know
What my racked lips have uttered, what last
groan,
Or curse or prayer, I breathed to heaven above—
And this the whole
Boon that I ask of you—to split in twain
With your wild night-winds, for the ancient
love
I bore you, O ye Sunset-flames, the smother
That rides like some dire curse upon my chest,
And let me feel again
The blessed western breeze—my restless brother
On many an endless road—that knew me best
Of all the winds that sweep around the world.
—Give me to drown in the dark, where, tempest-
hurled,
The black ship wavers down through soundless
sea;
Give me to die in a good fight, foul or fair,
With but a heart to stab, a throat to clutch,
And once again to see

That gay red haze of madness veil my sight—
To feel the hot breath and the blood-stiff hair—

I ask too much?

I am a beast, they say?

Then let me die,

*By all the gods, just as a beast should die—
Out in the flaming sunset, far away*

Under the open sky!

SYMPATHY

My neighbor, crabbed and mean and old as death,

Runs in in mad despair—"Come quick!" he cries,

"My house is blazing—all the things I prize
The greedy flame devours!" "Why lose your breath?"

I calmly answer—" 'Tis no lasting harm—
The day is chill; the fire is nice and warm."

My love and I fall out; we have some talk
Right on the public path—it seems to me
I ne'er have suffered such catastrophe.

Just then—"Why, neighbor, and does Cupid balk?

*My dears, young blood is warm, you know—
in truth,*

To see you quarrel gives me back my youth!"

ROUGE ET NOIR

RED or black? The louis, spinning,
Crossed the table's speckled baize;
“Thine, O Luck, to pick the winning
Color from the checkered maze.”
“Ah, *mon cher*, take care in choosing—
True love counsels ‘Play the red’—”
“Red it is.”—The game’s amusing—
“*Faites vos jeux*,” the croupier said.

O auburn her hair, and as warm as summer—
Rouge—not much—was an omen gay—
And eyes as bold as the raw red gold,
So what was there more to say—to say—
Aye, what was there more to say?

Red or black? “*Mon cher*, be heeding—
Black has won—’twill win again;
Hark to true love’s humble pleading—
Play the red, and play in vain!
Black will win far more than treasure—
Black it is—we’ll soon be dead—
Louis were meant to purchase pleasure.”
“*Faites vos jeux*,” the croupier said.

*O raven her hair as the mane of midnight—
Lips that swore they would e'er be true—
And a pair of eyes out of Paradise,
So what was there else to do—to do—
Aye, what was there else to do?*

L'ENVOI

Gay the game—’twas worth the playing—
Louis, loves, have fleetly fled:
What’s two louis? Easy paying!
“*Rien va plus,*” the croupier said.

THE CORPSE-FIRE

Sub-Tropical

'WARE! there's a light! Do ye know the blaze
And the stark grim shapes around—
Where the smoke-wraiths weave on a wind-
wrought loom
A shroud for the reeking ground?
Close? Too close! We'd 'a' joined the wrecks
And the dead on the houseless sand,
But the failing glare of the last grim Hearth
Warned us away from the land.

'Ware! There's a light on the weed-flung
beach—
Off—beat off—swing wide!
For the ghost-glow flares on the breakers'
crests
In the gay surf-wash overside.
Off—beat off—ye've the plague to praise
And the beacon of Dead Man's Light—
Aye, thank your gods that they burned a
corpse
From the cholera-camp this night!

'Ware! There's a light on the foam-ringed
beach—
Out—swing out—to the sea!
And thank your gods for the on-shore wind
That keeps ye fever-free;
The wind that sweeps from the ocean-waste,
Cold and honest and clean,
And swirls the sand on the ghost-rid dunes
Where the bare-picked wrecks careen.

VISIONS

In the Street—Afternoon

A face, chance-met,
With eyes lash-curtained, and perchance a
smile,
Or say, a tear;
A glimpse of satin-shimmer, or the wile
Of silken-curled coquette—
Or here,
Stumping and stooped, an empress with a crown
As thorned as Jesus wore—
Some poor unholy Mary, burdened down
With such a weight of stark inhuman sorrow
That all the gold of Magi-sung To-morrow,
Heaping forevermore,
Could scarcely drown it!—then,
Comes Youth and Wine and Laughter—
And look—behind
That crippled pencil-peddler—see,
Between him and the haggard Magdalen—
Serene, refined,
With fresh-faced, solemn children trailing after,
In prosy pomp, Respectability!

On the Road—Evening

A road,
Looping and twining to the heaven-rim;
A barren field, tare-sown
By winds and birds, and dim
Gray shadows trembling tenderly along
The mighty loins of distant mountain-ranks—
 The high abode
Of dream-divinities of moon and dew;
 While lone
And far and clear as some queer elfin song
 A cow-bell clanks.

Then through
The dusk-wrought romance of the eventide
Breaks with a shock the world—for there, beside
The magic road, some vagrant ne'er-do-weel
Kindles a fire to cook his evening meal.

APOSTASY

*And are the old gods dead, their altars bare,
The flowers strewn by loving hands of old,
Are they all withered?—Ay, indeed—the
mold*

Lies thick on fallen idols, and the air
That once was scented with the spice of Ind
Now knows no censer but the flying wind,
That wafts the breath of humble flowers there.
For they have sinned.

*So, sinned they then, those wicked gods of yore?
Say how they sinned, that I may understand—
In that they ruled unwisely?—Nay, the land
Did prosper, but they taught forbidden lore,
Let Eros wander wild, nor did rescind
The wanton laws of Youth undisciplined,
And when Joy knocked, threw wide the temple
door.*

'Twas thus they sinned.

*And this was sinning?—Ay, or so they say.—
Ah, then, beneath my vine and tamarind
Leave me to worship them, and go thy way.
Thus have I sinned!*

THE WONDERFUL WORLD

“O TRULY the world is a wonderful place!”

Sang the Poet at dawn;

“For the sun’s at my back and the wind’s in my
face,

And I’m off to the west at a merry good pace!

When I’m gone

Just give ’em my blessing, and tell ’em from me
I’ll bring back a fortune from over the sea,”

Sang the Poet at dawn.

“O truly the world is a horrible thing!”

Cried the Poet in pain;

“It’s made me a slave when I should have been
King,

I’ve worked with my hands, when I wanted to
sing—

And the gain

That I won by the sweat of my brow is so small
You scarcely could call it a ‘fortune’ at all!”

Cried the Poet in pain.

“And here I am home, with the sun at my
back,”

Quoth the Poet at eve.

“It’s little I have and it’s much that I lack—
I’ll turn me around and go back on my track—
I believe

That it’s gold that I see in the sunset’s face—
O truly the world is a wonderful place!”

Sang the Poet at eve.

THE BALLAD OF THE GYPSY KING

'TWAS over the stones of an ancient road
That slashes the distant east,
A ragged beggar came footing it in
Where the monarch sat at feast;
His hair was black, his face was brown,
His eyes like witches' lights,
And hot they shone on the ladies fair
And boldly on the knights.

"And who may ye be," cried the King in wrath,
"That dare to burst on me
In this lowly guise, when I sit at feast
'Mid vassals of high degree?
And who may ye be, who think the eye
Of a beggar is fit to stare
At the noblest maids of the royal court—
The fairest of all the fair?"

Now the ragged wight smiled a crooked smile
And his voice was far from low—
"O I am a Prince o' Romany
Who dare to speak you so—
I come as King to a brother King
To ask for roof and meat,
And there's never a maid of all this court
That's fit to kiss my feet.

“For I am the monarch of more than land
As well in your heart you sense—
Ah, son of the race of a thousand kings,
Be finished with this pretense!
By the brand you bear on your brawny arm,
That you hide with a silken sleeve,
I name you the son of a shameful birth—
Do you dare to disbelieve?

“I name you the son of a shiftless drab
In my father’s gypsy-camp—
Come, part the silk, let the people see
By the light of your banquet-lamp
The gypsy-mark on the strong sword-arm
Of this *son of a thousand kings*—
Who owes his life to a shameless churl
On some nameless wanderings!”

Now the King has paled to a sickly gray,
And in woeful mood he sits,
For never he ruled by lofty birth
But eke by chance and wits;
Aye, his throne he had won by steel and luck
That he held by steel and might,
Yet never he thought to know the need
To prove his heritage-right.

And now, as he reached for his trusty blade
 And cast his mantle back,
On the swelling skin of his knotted arm
 A scar stood, grim and black,
As though 'twere made by two twisted twigs
 Crossed in some children's play—
Loud laughed the wight “ 'Tis the *patteran*—
 A gypsy has been this way!”

O, clanking down to the marble floor
 Fell the blade from the royal hand—
“Ah, gods!” cried the King. “Do I dream or
 wake?
 Ye wight, do ye understand
The arts of the devil? or are ye *he*,
 Who has set this spell on me,
To see my life as an opened scroll
 By strength of your sorcery?

“For I seem to see my forgotten youth
 With all of its good and ill—
There's a white road-ribbon runs beckoning
 down
 From the crest of a breaking hill;
And over the hill lies Power and Fame,
 And the sun has stained it red,
But lo, at the summit its hot rim gilds
 A crown for my daring head!

“And it’s over the hill to the brink o’ doom
I feel my footsteps swing—
Ye may not jest with the gypsy-blood
So be ye slave or king.
You have witched me out of my crown and
throne—
Did you ask for roof and meat?
I give you my palace and fertile fields—
Go take what you need to eat!

“For now I am off to the end of the world
With only the wind for guide—
Small price to pay on the houseless way—
I’ll saddle no steed of pride;
So keep ye well—Long live the King!—
And light be the scepter’s load—
Yet, if so I know the breed, we’ll meet
A little along the road!”

A PORTRAIT

BORN with a mask of insincerity
 You feigned the virtues all the world es-
 teemed;
To you the nude and graceful Verity,
 Purest of nymphs, a shameless wanton
 seemed;
You stalked through life in buskins—brought
 the posing,
The green-room's make-up, to the work of
 men,
And played your part so well, the last disclosing
 Unmasked you but to see you mask again!

What *you* was underneath, the world may guess,
 But never prove—yet whether great or small
The mummer-soul within, men still confess
 You were the bravest actor of them all—
And write for epitaph “*Nor fame nor pelf*
He asked, but merely NOT to be himself!”

THE KING AND I

THE King and I went forth to ride—
(O fair the lands of his domain !)
He spurned a beggar-lass aside
Who dared to touch his bridle-rein ;
I gave her a smile and a piece of gold—
She threw me a kiss—the tale is told—
*Ah, brother with the seeing eye,
Which was the richer, he or I?*

THE ROADSIDE WEEDS

(The Vagabond Speaks)

THOUGH the world were mine for the plowing,
The sowing of wheat or of tare,
I'd spare the seeds of the vagrant weeds
And fling them at random there;
And if they should wither, 'tis justice,
Yet if they should flourish, 'tis fair,
For they are the yield of my favorite field
In the garden of Devil-may-care!

They are the gayest of friends on the highway,
Though gray with the roadside dust,
And gay on the narrowing byway
When the wheatfield is sad with the rust;
You can follow their fallow-land creeping
Wherever the road may run—
For they are the fruit of the reaping
Of the fields of the Prodigal Son.

And whose was the hand of their sowing?
Go ask ye the wind in the trees;
Go ask ye the breeze that is blowing
A magic from over the seas—

“South I will grip ye a scepter,
North I will win ye a helm,
East and to West what your heart loves the
best—
Give ye the World for a realm!”

“Aye, but the wealth of my harvest?”
“Reap ye the weeds by the road—
Or love ye to toil on a stubberner soil?
Go get ye a master and goad.”
“Nay, I will keep to my vineyard—
Mullen and bramble and tare,—
For they are the yield of my favorite field
In the garden of Devil-may-care!”

DISILLUSION

“SEEK me,” she laughed, “at the Ends of Earth,
Seek for me over the edge of Dawn—
Are you so mighty of mind and brawn
That you scorn to show a maid your worth?
Follow the lead of my madcap mirth
To Heaven-portal or Hades-gate—
But tempt me not with the weary bait
Of Prosy-plenty or Romance-dearth!”

I sought her far where the heavens flame
Like shimmering domes of molten brass—
'Mid painted isles where the weird moon swings
In the palm-tree's top like God's cuirass;
I found her—“*Beloved,*” she cried in shame—
“*Love lies not here, but in common things!*”

THE TIME-FOOLS

YOUTH

THOUGH the lavish moments squander
All the precious gold of pleasure,
Though the ravished senses wander
'Mid the cream of Ophir's treasure,
Yet, by all the gods above,
Take the life, but leave us love!

AGE

Though the maidens' soft caresses
Be as honey of Hymettus,
Though the chilly soul confesses
Eros-flames at last forget us,
Toil or ease or peace or strife,
Take the love, but leave us life!

THE HUCKSTER

*Buy a bit of magic,
From the Hills o' Dream—
Visions of the night-time,
Never what they seem;
Scraps of idle Fancy,
Threads of fairy gold—
Buy such mighty magic
As was never sold!*

Buy a bit of magic
You who scorn to dream—
Would you glimpse the future
Or the Past redeem?
Clear against the darkness,
Cloudy in the sun—
Buy a skein o' Dream-stuff,
All your hopes are won!

Dreams of gold and glamourie, far on Southern
seas,
Love and strife and venturing, Fancy's fan-
tasies ;
Seize them, O ye sleepers, snatch them while
ye may—
Like a breath of Heaven-wind, they have blown
away !

Buy a pinch o' Romance
Stolen over-sea,
Where the palmy islands
Promise royally—
Wealth of hidden treasure,
Store of pirate gold—
Draw your gory cutlass,
Glut your galley's hold!

Would you know the conquest, the battle's
ecstasy?
Call your shadow armies, and lead to victory;
Yours to plunder Ophir, and yours the spoil
of Ind—
Hark the ghostly trumpet-call braying down
the wind!

Buy a royal diadem
Or a crown o' thorn—
I have served your fathers
Long ere you were born;
Aye, the long-tailed monkey,
Dancing in the trees,
Dreams, like you, of gardens
Of Hesperides!

Or it be a maiden fair, whom you long to wed,
Lo, and by my sorcery the marriage-words are
said;
Love and Hope, Ambition, Lust—all of them
are thrall
To the humble Dream-smith, the master of
them all!

*Buy a bit of magic
From the Hills o' Dream—
Visions of the night-time,
Never what they seem;
Scraps of idle fancy,
Threads of fairy gold—
Buy such mighty magic
As was never sold!*

WHEN THE POET DIED

ONE night a somber, dun processional
Trailed drably through the crêpe-hung avenues
Of my dark city of tremendous dream,
With hearsed and plumèd terror; till I wept,
Begging the mouthing mourners—"Lo, what
king
Is dead so greatly?" "Peace, O Fool," they
wailed,
"Knowest thou not this night a poet died?"

Then, as the bier wheeled grimly by, a vain
Black-plumaged peacock proudly at the head
Of all the dour cortège, methinks I heard
A merry, mocking satyr laugh within.

IN AVALON

In Avalon, in Avalon away
Beyond the circling rim of chaos-sea
There lilts a song of dream and glamourie,
In Avalon, in Avalon away;
“Ah, scatter, Spring, thy flowered fantasy,
For Hero Might-have-been is wed to Princess
Yesterday!”

In Avalon, in Avalon away,
Where you are Queen, O Love, and I am
King,
What reck we what the dim To-morrow bring,
In Avalon, in Avalon away!
I envy not the Gods their glorying,
When Hero Might-have-been is wed to Prin-
cess Yesterday.

Ah, far and far, in Avalon away,
Too far to fear the sting of sorrowing,
The Hero Might-have-been has won the Prin-
cess Yesterday!

THE SONG OF THE BUTTERFLIES

LILTS the music through its measure
Like the ripple of a dream,
Trip the dancers through their pleasure
Till the dawning-gleam;
Time is old and we are young—
Thus the song is sung:

“Love and Life forever last—
Pluck the blowing rose,
While the Demon of the Past
Ever greater grows;
Withered blossoms, dying love,
Memory and Pain—
Howsoe'er the harvest prove,
Let us dance again!”

Drop the petals of the flowers,
Dims the fervor of the glance,
Fly the fairy-golden hours,
Handmaids of Romance—
Time is young and we are old—
Thus the tale is told:

“Loving, living, cannot last,
 Pluck the wilting rose—
Let the Demon of the Past
 As the Present pose;
Withered blossoms, dying love,
 Memory and Pain—
Howsoe'er the harvest prove,
 Let us dance again!”

DE AMICITIA

“O WOULD I were happy as you!” I cried
 “Who laugh all the livelong day—
Whom, all of the years that I’ve lived beside,
 I’ve never found aught but gay,—
Or other than faithful and cheery and kind,
 Thoughtful, unselfish, and wise;
’Tis surely a wonderful world you find
 Through the gold of your laughing eyes!”

*Ah, friend who was nearest and dearest to me,
 I knew you the least of all—
You gave me the wine—so I should not see
 That you drank for yourself the gall!*

LEAVEN O' LIFE

THE wheat and tares of life were ground to
meal—

(So runs the ancient legend)—and the Gods
Fashioned a myriad cakes, and baked them
brown

And crisp in passion's fire, then spread them
wide

On the broad window-ledge of Earth to cool;
And lo, the cakes were called the race of Man,
The wheat-meal Virtue, and the tare-dust
Fault.

“But” (saith the legend) “ere the grain was
ground,

While yet the mill-wheel labored, came a Faun,
And mocked the busy gods, and pelted flowers—
Violets, roses, columbine and rue—

Till some by chance were mingled with the grain
And leavened all: whence grew the wondrous
gift

Of power to see the splendor of the sky,
Of power to feel the transport of the tear,
Of power to fight with odds, to lose, to smile
While losing, at the sneers of all the world—
In brief, the gift that makes us more than Gods,
And flings light-hearted lives to jest with Hell.”

THE TWO OF US

I know a chap—O, he's no friend of mine—
A cautious chap, who keeps his wary eyes
Fast on the path he treads, lest luring skies
Seduce his prosy brain—or dawning-shine
With lavish splendor craftily entwine
His senses, so he walk in puddles. Now,
Of course—if asked—he could (and *would*)
tell how
I, through my gay star-gazing (was it wine
Or merely poetry that mixed me?) trod
All careless through the mire, although I
swore
The glory of the sunset really bore
Me, heedless of all else, right up to God.
Now he was clean, and I was muddy-shod—
Which of the two of us deserved the more?

A SONG OF THE OLD GODS

O FOLLOW the wind o'er the beckoning hill
Where the boundless kingdoms lie—
Sons o' the Sun and Sky,
Can ye harken and yet be still?
Can ye hear the mirth
Of the seas that swing
To the ends of earth
Where the breezes bring
A chant of the years when the world was young
When the heart was true and the hot lip clung
*(Aye, the flowers were red on the Eden-tree—
They're withered now on the Eden-tree)*
And Love ran wild i' the spring?

O follow the road where it leaps to meet
And carry ye off and away!
Strap ye the wings o' Day
To your laggard and lowly feet!
Shall ye stop your ears
To the winds that sing
When the dawn appears
And its flaming wing

Sweeps through a wood where the heart o' the
Sun
Hides in a rose when the day is done,
(*Aye, the flowers were red on the Eden-tree—*
They're withered now on the Eden-tree)
And Love runs wild i' the spring?

AT THE ALTAR OF YOUTH AND LOVE

“So that the Love-lights burn,” I cried,

 “And brightly blaze,

Not mine, O Love, in foolish pride

 To stint my praise;

So long as Youth and Thou remain

I praise no God except ye twain.”

“But years have wings,” the Voices say,

 And fleetly fly—

Thy time is brief—an hour, a day—

 And then to die:

Altars are bare, and Deities

Are drunk, or sleep, or gone o'er seas!”

“Nay, not *my* Gods!” I cry, “Behold!

 The sacred flame!”

I show the altar, rich in gold,

 With loud acclaim;

Alas, e'en while I prayed, the Fire

Choked 'mid the ash of spent desire.

THE TOPS'L SCHOONER

The Pirate Craft Speaks.

*You fear no more to see my sails
Come sweeping up the seas,
Nor guard with pike and carronade
Your laden argosies;
You never turn and run for it
When the lookout bellows now
“There’s a low black tops’l schooner
Just off the starboard bow!”*

You trudge the sea in sordidness,
And find a sordid grave—
Collision, ice, or hurricane,
You’ll die a burden-slave ;
And never know the ecstasy
Of a hot fight, hand-to-hand,
With a low black tops’l schooner
A hundred leagues from land !

You’ll never smell the powder,
Nor feel your hair-roots rouse
When the long nine sends its warning
Across your questing bows ;
When the round-shot splits the foremast,
And your sturdy spirits fail
As the low black tops’l schooner
Pours men across your rail !

No more you'll rake the Indies
With clumsy "ninety-fours,"
And strand on hidden coral-reefs
Off fever-ridden shores ;
I showed your nimblest frigates
The cleanest pair of heels—
The low black tops'l schooner
That never dawn reveals !

For now my snuggest harbor
Shall know me ne'er again,
And now my safest anchorage
Shall wait for me in vain—
A ghost-ship, manned by phantoms
From Morgan down to Kidd,
The tops'l schooner's left for aye
The islands where she hid !

*You fear no more to see my sails
Come sweeping up the seas,
Nor guard with pike and carronade
Your laden argosies;
You never turn and run for it
When the lookout bellows now
“There's a low black tops'l schooner
Just off the starboard bow!”*

LOTOPHAGOI

BECAUSE we do not hold your God as true—
O iron-hearted galley-slaves of gold—
Because we do not judge our worship due
A scowling Toil-wrought Baal of metal
cold—
Because our hearts are young, our sorrows few,
Consider, are we baser clay than you?

Because we love to dream away the days,
And count the lavish sunlight ample prize,
And deem your lust for power and human praise
As senseless visions of a madman's eyes,
Because we idle along sunny ways,
Do we deserve the pity in your gaze?

Because around our shores the warm waves roll,
And palm-fringed islands strew our south-
ern seas,
Because we know no isles 'twixt Pole and Pole
One-half so near to Paradise as these—
Because we scorn your toil and miser's dole,
We pray you, let no pity rend your soul!

"ET EGO IN ARCADIA VIXI—"

O I was born in Arcady
When all the world was young—
Where the wood-thrush sings in his forest
bowers
“Loves may wither like fallen flowers,
And fade like sunset-fantasy,
To die unwept, unsung;
Yet fields are rich in Arcady
Where all the world is young!”

O I have lived in Arcady
And known the sun and rain—
The glint of dawn on the dew-wet heather,
Tears and laughter of April-weather,
And lo, the woodland sorcery
Has called me home again—
For loves are true in Arcady
Through years of sun and rain.

Ah, love, the road to Arcady
Is through the Hills o' Dream—
Follow away till the cypress-alleys
Open to sunlit, joyous valleys,
And learn again the magicry
Of dew and dawning-gleam;
For hearts are young in Arcady
Beyond the Hills o' Dream!

GYPSY SONG

DAWN-WINDS and a waxing sun,
 Eastern hills aglow,
Soon the laggard shadows run
 To the vales below;
Sheep-bells from the waking fold
 Tinkle merrily—
Can ye fairer land behold
 Than fair Romany?

Out beneath the open sky
 Hark the gypsy-song—
O beloved, thou and I
 Tarry here too long!
Burdenless and fancy-free,
 Take the wind for guide;
What are kings to thee and me,
 Striding side by side?

Out beyond the Ends of Earth,
 Off in Fairyland,
Lies our goal—of little worth
 When To-day's at hand!
Praise the Sun-god throned above,
 O ye strollers gay,
And the goddess Life-and-Love
 Showing ye the way!

Careless slaves of sun and breeze,
Wind-flushed, sunburnt, browned,
This our house, the friendly trees
And the friendly ground!
Who knows where our heads will lie
In such merry weather?
Sun and wind and Thou and I
Arm-in-arm together!

SEA CHANTEY

WHEN the storm-winds of Heaven have slain
the Sun,

And he dies in the bloody West,
When the stars burn out, and the day is done
O'er the endless sea's unrest,
“Listen—O listen—” the Shadow cries
To the blind sea-reapers—“Rise—O rise—
No longer sleep—”
Save us, O Lord, when the reapers reap!

When the ships swing out on the ebbing tide
To the harbor of missing wrecks,
And the wet sea-devils from overside
Keep tryst on the reeling decks,—
When the wind-fiends howl in the houseless
dark,
And the foam-paved water-ways lie stark,
O God of the Deep
Save us, thy slaves, when the reapers reap!

“THE CITY OF DREADFUL DAWN”

LIKE paint upon a pallid cheek,
The nightmare-city daubs its chilly gray
With warm red rouge of morn—
And lo, the day,
That shaking Age shall fear, that Youth shall
seek,
Trails in its bannered pageantry of scorn—
Mocking awhile in noonday pride
And then
Veiling again 'neath curtained sunset-skies
The horrors, cloaked and masked, that laugh-
ing ride
To grace the shambles of a Paradise.

Poor Time-fools bowed before an empty shrine!
With each the Goddess died, with each began;
Hail, Lucifer! Haste, gild with light divine
The pale slaves of thy painted courtesan!

VICTORY-SONG OF THE AEGEAN PIRATES

SWIFT as the seagull that turns in the sun with
the dew of the spray on the gray of her
wings,

Flashing to whirl like an eddy of breeze that
old Æolus checks in the flush of its
flight—

So, O Belovèd, we harry the lumbering hulks of
the clumsy flotilla that brings
Spices from Egypt and Pontus and Persia
and rich-woven silks from the Borders of
Light.

Rangers are we of the Narrower Sea, where
the islands are scattered as spindrift
that flies

Roused from its coverts of beryl and emerald,
lairs of the nymphs of the Winds and
the Waves—

Spindrift that leaping to 'scape from the prow
that is notched to a star in the African
skies

Wins o'er the gunwale and beats on the
backs of the kings of the sweep-head—
the bent galley-slaves !

O my Belovèd, the oar-thresh shall sing of my
love and the kingdom I cast at thy
feet—

Lo, I am lord of the rock-battered seas, and
my sword is a terror from Thrace to
Cyrene!

King, by the sway of the staggering deck as
we reel through the wreck of the fight,
and the fleet

Hails us the masters of Hades and Heaven
and seas that are given to billow be-
tween!

*Swing her about! Let them drown if they will,
let them choke in their blood and the
sense of their shame—*

*They who are slaves of the Rome of the
West, where the sun sinks to rest on
Hesperian shores.*

*Swing her about—let them die in the dark,
where the wake is a wavering welter of
flame—*

*Drop them behind to the drone of the wind
and the dirge of the drum of our hurry-
ing oars!*

MY FRIEND PAN

WITH Pan amid the flowers,
When I was young and gay,
I danced away the hours
With rhyme and roundelay;
For the world was at its spring,
And Life was at its morn—
Who dreamed the years would bring
When the Rose died, the Thorn?

But when the summer faded—
The summer-time of Youth—
And weary, worn and jaded,
I felt the Thorn of Truth,
I turned to Pan a-sighing
For solace of romance—
Cried he, “Come, haste thy dying—
We youngsters want to dance!”

THE ROAD TO ROMANY

“AND what is the worth of your fertile realm?”

Sang the wind to the weary king,

“And what is the price of your jeweled helm,

Or the tribute the barons bring?

Your palace I’ll buy with the roofless sky,

For your gold I’ll give you the sun,

For your silken bed, you may lay your head

On the earth, when the day is done.

“*By the side of the Road to Romany,*

The magic Road to Romany—

O I’ll buy your crown for a wind-swept down

And a bit of the Road to Romany!”

“And what do I want with my sheltered fields?”

Cried the king to the restless breeze.

“I’d give all the tribute my kingdom yields

For a cure for my soul’s disease;

O my throne I’ll trade for a leafy glade

With the white road beckoning through,

And my helm I’ll pawn for a golden dawn

And the voice of a comrade true!

“*We two on the Road to Romany,*

The magic Road to Romany—

O I’d sell my crown for a wind-swept down

And a bit of the Road to Romany!”

THE SONG OF THE OPTIMIST

THOUGH the vintage be poor, at the best,

 Drink it up—it is wine;

So it kindle the heart, for the rest

 You're a fool to repine.

So you find in the dream and desire

Full reward for the sting and the tire,

Though the price be the gold of the West,

 Drink it up—it is wine!

O the maid is not fair at the most—

 What of that—it is Love.

Or perhaps you have loved and have lost—

 It is Heaven above

While it lasts, and for all of the pain,

If you lived it all over again,

Though your honor and soul were the cost—

 Would you stop, if 'twere Love?

Have you wasted your fortune of years?

 Never mind—it is life.

Have you harvested nothing but tears

 From the barrens of Strife?

Have you failed, and seen crumble the dream

That you built with your blood where the gleam

Of the fading false-dawn disappears?

 Think of this—*it is life!*

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